

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for investigating intellectual property related to a reference piece of intellectual property, said method comprising:

providing a first database of discrete pieces of first intellectual property, said pieces of first intellectual property each including an associated set of first characteristics;

providing a second database of discrete pieces of second intellectual property, said second intellectual property being of a different type from said first intellectual property;

searching said first database to identify said pieces of first intellectual property having predetermined characteristics in common with the reference piece of intellectual property;

developing at least one query based on at least a portion of said first characteristics of said identified pieces of first intellectual property; and,

searching said second database to identify said pieces of second intellectual property satisfying said at least one query.

2. A method as in claim 1, wherein said pieces of first intellectual property are selected from the group consisting of registered trademarks, unregistered trademarks and applications to register trademarks.

3. A method as in claim 2, wherein said pieces of second intellectual property are selected from the group consisting of patents and patent applications.

4. A method as in claim 3, wherein the reference piece of intellectual property is a trademark.

5. A method as in claim 1, wherein said pieces of second intellectual property are selected from the group consisting of patents and patent applications.

6. A method as in claim 1, wherein the reference piece of intellectual property is a trademark.

7. A method as in claim 1, wherein said step of searching said first database includes searching said first database to identify said pieces of first intellectual property which are identical matches to the reference piece of intellectual property.

8. A method as in claim 1, wherein said step of searching said first database includes searching said first database to identify said pieces of first intellectual property which include at least one term in common with at least a portion of the reference piece of intellectual property.

9. A method as in claim 1 further comprising sorting said identified pieces of first intellectual property.

10. A method as in claim 9, wherein said step of sorting includes comparing each of said identified pieces of first intellectual property with the reference piece of intellectual property to determine degree of similarity therebetween.

11. A method as in claim 1, wherein the steps of developing at least one query and searching said second database are sequentially conducted for each said identified piece of first intellectual property.

12. A method as in claim 11, wherein one of said first characteristics includes the name of the owner of the associated said piece of first intellectual property, and wherein said at least one query includes a first query, said first query being to identify all said pieces of second intellectual property in which the owner of the respective said identified piece of first intellectual property has rights.

13. A method as in claim 12, wherein said first query being to identify all said pieces of second intellectual property in which the owner of the respective said identified piece of first intellectual property has recorder ownership rights.

14. A method as in claim 11, wherein one of said first characteristics includes the goods or services of the associated said piece of first intellectual property, and wherein said at least one query includes a second query, said second query being to identify all said pieces of second intellectual property which relate to the goods or servies of the respective said identified piece of first intellectual property.

15. A method as in claim 11, wherein one of said first characteristics includes information relating to dates of first use of the associated said piece of first intellectual property, and wherein said at least one query includes a third query, said third query being to identify all said pieces of second intellectual property having a filing date or priority date after the dates of first use of the respective said identified piece of first intellectual property.

16. A method as in claim 11, wherein one of said first characteristics includes a classification of the associated said piece of first intellectual property, and wherein said at least one query includes a

fourth query, said fourth query being to identify all said pieces of second intellectual property having a classification equivalent to the classification of the respective said identified piece of first intellectual property.